HOSEA 6

PARAGRAPH DIVISIONS OF MODERN TRANSLATIONS

NASB	NKJV	NRSV	TEV	NJB
The Response to God's Rebuke	A Call to Repentance	All Israel has forgotten the Lord and has sought help from other gods and other nations (4:1-8:14)	The People's Insincere Repentance (6:1-7:2)	The Israelite's Reply
6:1-3 (1-3)	6:1-3 (1-3)	6:1-6 (1-6)	6:1-3	6:1-6 (1-6)
	Impenitence of Israel and Judah (6:4-7:10)			
6:4-11 (4-11)	6:4-11 (4-6)		6:4-6	Disorder in Israel
	(7-11)	6:7-10 (7-10)	6:7-10	6:7-7:2 (6:6-7:2)
		(11a)	6:11-7:2	

READING CYCLE THREE (see "Bible Interpretation Seminar")
FOLLOWING THE ORIGINAL AUTHOR'S INTENT AT PARAGRAPH LEVEL

This is a study guide commentary, which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

Read the chapter in one sitting. Identify the subjects (reading cycle #3). Compare your subject divisions with the five translations above. Paragraphing is not inspired, but it is the key to following the original author's intent, which is the heart of interpretation. Every paragraph has one and only one subject.

WORD AND PHRASE STUDY

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 6:1-3

1"Come, let us return to the LORD.

For He has torn *us*, but He will heal us;
He has wounded us, but He will bandage us.
[2]He will revive us after two days;
He will raise us up on the third day,
That we may live before Him.
[3]So let us know, let us press on to know the LORD.
His going forth is as certain as the dawn;
And He will come to us like the rain,
Like the spring rain watering the earth."

6:1 "Come" This is an *Qal* IMPERATIVE (BDB 229, KB 246). It seems that 6:1-3 describes the true repentance called for in Hos. 5:14-15, but when one reads 6:4-6 it is obvious that the repentance is only skin deep and not a permanent change of character or the renewal of a personal relationship.

▣ **"let us return"** This is a *Qal* COHORTATIVE (BDB 996, KB 1427). See SPECIAL TOPIC: REPENTANCE (OT).

Verses 1-3 may be the words of the priests. This whole context has been addressing them. This then would be their liturgical response to YHWH's call for repentance in Hos. 5:15.

▣ **"He has torn *us*"** This term (BDB 382, KB 380, *Qal* PERFECT) may be an allusion to 5:14. YHWH is described in judgment as a ferocious lion (cf. Job 16:9). This same term is used in Amos 1:11, but it is uncertain if it refers to YHWH or Edom's anger.

The phrase "has torn" is parallel to "has wounded" (BDB 645, KB. 697, *Hiphil* JUSSIVE [in form, but not function, *Old Testament Parsing Guide* by Beall, Banks, and Smith, p. 655]). This term in context could mean, "to smite with a single non-lethal blow" (e.g., Exod. 21:15,19) or "to smite repeatedly" (e.g., Exod. 2:11,13; 5:16).

SPECIAL TOPIC: LIONS IN THE OT

▣ **"He will heal us"** The term "heal" (BDB 950, KB 1272, *Qal* IMPERFECT) is parallel to "will bandage" (BDB 289, KB 289, *Qal* IMPERFECT). Israel recognizes that the source of her judgment is YHWH and that if they repent He will forgive and restore.

6:2 "revive us. . .raise us" The first VERB (BDB 310, KB 309, *Piel* IMPERFECT) is from the root "to live" or "revive" (e.g., Ps. 119:50,93). It is parallel to "raise" (BDB 877, KB 1086, *Hiphil* IMPERFECT) in the next poetic line.

This may be the standard theology line they had heard. They were counting on the unchanging merciful character of God to revive, rescue, and deliver them! They had forgotten and ignored the covenantal requirement of faith and obedience, but wanted its benefits (cf. Jerrmiah 7)!

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT

SPECIAL TOPIC: COVENANT REQUIREMENTS OF ISRAEL

▣ **"after two days"** This may be a Hebrew idiom of a short period of time (e.g., Jdg. 11:4).

▣ **"on the third day"** This refers to

1. a common proverb for the establishment of an agreement (cf. Josh. 9:16-17; 2 Sam. 20:4; Ezra 10:8-9)

2. simply a literary pattern (i.e., two. . .three) denoting a brief period. Israel was hoping YHWH would forgive and restore quickly

However, some commentators (I think wrongly) use this verse as a scriptural proof for Jesus being in the grave three days (cf. 1 Cor. 15:4).

6:3 "let us know, let us press on to know" Both of these VERBS are *Qal* COHORTATIVES. They speak of a desire for an intimate, interpersonal fellowship with YHWH. This is the theme of Hosea (cf. Hos. 2:8,20; 4:1,6; 5:4; 6:3,6).

▣ **"the dawn. . .the rain. . .the spring rain"** These describe the regularities of nature (the basis of the modern scientific method), so too, the character of YHWH. His basic desire is fellowship with humans made in His image. This was/is the purpose of creation! His love is to the thousandth generations (cf. Deut. 7:9); His anger only to the third and fourth generations (cf. Deut. 5:9). God's settled gracious character is the hope of mankind!

One of my favorite authors is F. F. Bruce. He has a good article about the rains in Palestine in *Answers to Questions*, p. 13. This book has been so helpful to me that I highly recommend it to you.

SPECIAL TOPIC: CHARACTERISTICS OF ISRAEL'S GOD (OT)

NASB (UPDATED) TEXT: HOSEA 6:4-11

4What shall I do with you, O Ephraim?
What shall I do with you, O Judah?
For your loyalty is like a morning cloud
And like the dew which goes away early.
5Therefore I have hewn *them* in pieces by the prophets;
I have slain them by the words of My mouth;
And the judgments on you are *like* the light that goes forth.
6 For I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice,
And in the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.
7But like Adam they have transgressed the covenant;
There they have dealt treacherously against Me.
8Gilead is a city of wrongdoers,
Tracked with bloody *footprints*.
9And as raiders wait for a man,
So a band of priests murder on the way to Shechem;
Surely they have committed crime.
10In the house of Israel I have seen a horrible thing;
Ephraim's harlotry is there, Israel has defiled itself.
11Also, O Judah, there is a harvest appointed for you,
When I restore the fortunes of My people.

6:4 "What shall I do with you" Literally this is "what may I do to you" or "what can I make of you." YHWH speaks directly through Hosea. God is amazed at the shallowness and shame of His people's religiosity, but He is also broken hearted at their deserved judgment (cf. Hos. 11:8-9, this is parental tough love).

▣ **"For your loyalty is like a morning cloud"** "Morning cloud" is imagery for transitoriness (cf. Hos. 13:3). Their repentance was superficial and their loyalty (i.e., covenant faithfulness) continued to be a mockery.

The term "loyalty" (*hesed*, BDB 338) is the same term translated "kindness" in Hos. 4:2.

SPECIAL TOPIC: LOVINGKINDNESS (*hesed*)

▣ **"And like the dew which goes away early"** "Dew" (BDB 378) is used in two senses in the OT:

1. a way for crops to get moisture in the summer (positive)
2. a metaphor for fleetness (negative)

In Hosea 6:4 the absence of Israel's repentance is matched in Hos. 13:3 by the swiftness of her judgment.

6:5 This verse's parallelism shows the inspiration of the prophets' (Amos through Elisha) message. The second line is possibly the origin of the metaphors of Rev. 1:12,16. God's words are a powerful force (i.e., Genesis 1; Isa. 55:11; John 1:1)!

SPECIAL TOPIC: THE BIBLE (its uniqueness and inspiration)

▣

NASB, NKJV	**"the judgments on you are *like* the light that goes forth"**
NRSV, REB, LXX, Peshitta	**"my judgment goes forth as the light"**
TEV	**-------**
NJB	**"my sentence will blaze forth like the dawn"**

It is possible to divide the Hebrew consonants differently and have "my judgment (justice) goes forth like the light" (cf. LXX, Peshsitta, and Targums).

The term "light" (BDB 21) alludes to "the dawn" (BDB 1007) in Hos. 6:3b. As the dawn surely comes, so too, God's message of judgment through His prophets (cf. Gen. 1:1; Isa. 55:11; John 1:1).

6:6 "I delight in loyalty rather than sacrifice" God looks at the heart! Motive is the key (cf. Jer. 9:24)! This is one of the key theological passages in the book (cf. Hos. 8:7; 11:12). "Loyalty" is the same as Hos. 6:4, but here it is true covenant love/loyalty. Jesus used this concept in His discussion with the Pharisees in Matt. 9:13; 12:7. This does not imply that God wanted them to stop sacrificing, but to be careful to have the right motive (cf. 1 Sam. 15:22; Isa. 1:11-13; Jer. 7:21-23; Amos 5:21-24; Micah 6:6-8). For a good discussion see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp.207-208, 294-295). The sacrificial system was a way to show the seriousness of the sin and the willingness of God to accept sinners into fellowship with Himself. However, when it was turned into ritual without repentance and faith, it became a farce, a barrier to a true interpersonal relationship with God.

6:7	
NASB	**"But like Adam they had transgressed the covenant"**
NKJV, Peshitta	**"But like men they transgressed the covenant"**
NRSV	**"But as soon as they entered the land at Adam, they broke the covenant"**
NJB	**"But they have broken the covenant at Adam"**
REB	**"At Adam they violated My covenant"**

JPSOA	**"But they, to a man, have transgressed the covenant"**
LXX	**"But they like a person transgressing a covenant"**

At first, this seems to be a reference to Adam, our original forefather, but on closer examination of the context there seems to be three cities (Adam, Gilead, and Shechem, cf. NRSV, NJB, REB) linked to covenant breaking. Hosea mentions many cities and historical allusions. Some to ancient events, some to contemporary events that we do not know about and some to future events of restoration and hope. This event at Adam and Gilead on the road to Shechem is a mystery. But, it involved priests so it may have been political or religious. Since Shechem is a "city of refuge" it may have involved an issue of asylum. The translations, both ancient and modern, differ widely on their understanding of this verse. However, based on context, I think "Adam" must be understood as the city mentioned in Josh. 3:16. The "there" (BDB 1027) in Hos. 6:7b supports this interpretation.

The VERB (BDB 716, KB 778, *Qal* PERFECT) means "to pass over," "pass through," or "pass by." In this context it means to transgress, violate the known boundary (e.g., 8:1; Num. 14:41; Deut. 17:2; 26:13; Ps. 17:3; Isa. 24:5).

▣

NASB, Peshitta	**"There they have dealt treacherously against Me"**
NKJV	**"There they dealt treacherously with Me"**
NRSV	**"There they dealt faithlessly with Me"**
TEV	**--------**
NJB	**"there they have betrayed me"**
REB	**"there they played me false"**
JPSOA	**"This is where they have been false to Me"**
LXX	**"there they despised Me"**

The VERB (BDB 93, KB 108, *Qal* PERFECT) means "to deal unfaithfully to a covenant" (i.e., marriage as an analogy to YHWH, e.g., Isa. 24:16; Jer. 3:20; 5:11; Mal. 2:15). The term is used several times in Isa. 33:1.

Notice the very personal aspect of this act of faithlessness (i.e., "against Me"). This same VERB is used in Hos. 5:7 in connection to the marriage vows!

6:9 "as riders wait for a man,
So a band of priests murder on the way to Shechem" Possibly Shechem remained faithful to YHWH and other priests would kill worshipers going to Shechem so that they would have more worshipers at Bethel or Gilgal or, possibly the priests of Shechem were so jealous that they wanted to stop the pilgrims passing through their town from going to other cultic sites. It is obvious that whoever is the premeditated perpetrator (for a good discussion of this Hebrew term and its relationship to the Ten Commandments see *Hard Sayings of the Bible*, pp. 114-116 and 148-149), the priests are far from their original call.

6:10 "a horrible thing" This term (BDB 1045) is used several times in Jeremiah in different connotations:

1. the basic meaning is rottenness (cf. Jer. 29:17)
2. the corruption of the religious leaders (cf. Jer. 5:30-31; 23:14)
3. the corruption of the nation as a whole (cf. Jer. 18:13)

▣ **"Israel has defiled itself"** This VERB (BDB 379, KB 375, *Niphal* PERFECT) is used several times to denote fertility worship (e.g., Hos. 5:3).

6:11

NASB	**"Also, O Judah, there is a harvest appointed for you, When I restore the fortunes of My people"**
NKJV	**"Also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed for you When I return the captives of My people"**
NRSV	**"For you also, O Judah, a harvest is appointed When I would restore the fortunes of my people"**
TEV	**"And as for you, people of Judah, I have set a time to punish you also for what you are doing"**
NJB	**"For you too, Judah, a harvest is in store When I restore my people's fortune"**

This verse is ambiguous. It seems to refer to the judgment (i.e., harvest, cf. Jer. 51:33; Joel 3:13) that will also fall on Judah for her idolatry (cf. Hos. 8:14; 12:2), yet the next line implies a hope of restoration. It is possible that 6:11b should go with 7:1a.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR CHAPTERS 5 AND 6

This is a study guide commentary which means that you are responsible for your own interpretation of the Bible. Each of us must walk in the light we have. You, the Bible, and the Holy Spirit are priority in interpretation. You must not relinquish this to a commentator.

These discussion questions are provided to help you think through the major issues of this section of the book. They are meant to be thought-provoking, not definitive.

1. Describe the historical setting of the war mentioned in Hos. 5:8-15.
2. Why is Hos. 6:1-4 thought to only be superficial repentance?
3. Define the Hebrew term "to know."
4. Why is Hos. 6:11 so hard to interpret?

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